

# The Natural Grocery Company

12 December 2024

## Response to National Organic Standard Bill

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The Natural Grocery Company (TNGC) is an organic retail business with 13 retail stores operating across South East Queensland, Northern Rivers of NSW and the Northern beaches of Sydney. The company operates under the Flannerys, Fundies and Kunara retail brands.

Flannerys has been a retail brand supporting the organic market since 1973. While the ownership may have changed during the last 50 years, the passion and commitment to supporting customers access to organic products has never waned.

As a retail business that actively promotes organic, we do find it unusual that Australia does not currently have a standard definition of "Organic". Customers place value on the word organic, as they rightly perceive the product to be off a higher standard. However, there is no control of the use of the word "organic" and as such customers are being misled.

For example, all the produce sold across our network of stores is sourced from growers that have accreditation from one of the industry recognised bodies. Customers can have confidence that the product we promote and sell in our stores as organic, is grown without synthetic or chemical based pesticides and insecticides. We maintain a record of all supplier's accreditation and require any new suppliers to provide this accreditation prior to engagement on supply. We would expect all retailers who sell organic produce to act in a similar manner. While it is difficult to quantify the additional cost incurred to manage this process it would be reasonable to follow that this cost leads to an increase in retail price to our consumers. Retailers not playing on a level field, can give the impression of lower prices, to the detriment of retailers acting ethically.

As a business we have over 400 suppliers, the vast majority of these have taken the time and expense to gain accreditation from the various industry recognised bodies. There is an input cost to these suppliers, from this process. We have seen recently that some suppliers are pulling back from this process. We have no doubt that the ability to tag a product as organic without accreditation, with no consequences is driving this behaviour. As a retailer with longevity in this industry, who customers look to, to ensure veracity in products, the current situation desperately needs addressing.

We believe that customers trust, and integrity of product is paramount in the organic industry and strongly recommend that the Australian Government recognise the need and benefits attained by having a standard definition of organic.



We would strongly advocate that the Department of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry is charged with creating a definition of organic and that the government provide a framework to build integrity across our industry.

Kind Regards,

Fergus Collins  
Chief Executive Officer

